

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3250

ANSWERED ON:21.03.2007

NATIONAL MATERNITY BENEFIT SCHEME

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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether financial assistance is provided under the National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) at the rate of Rs. 500 a birth to women who are 19 years or above;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether despite allocating the funds to the States, lakhs of poor women in the rural areas have been denied the benefit;
- (d) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether a large sum is lying unspent with the States under this scheme;
- (f) if so, whether there is no proper monitoring of the utilization of funds under this scheme; (g) whether keeping in view the tardy implementation of the scheme, the Supreme Court has pulled up the Center as well as the States in this regard; and (h) if so, the steps taken or being taken by the Union Government in consultation with the States for proper implementation of the scheme?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) & (b) : The National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) has ended in March, 2005. Instead, a new scheme called Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) has been introduced since April, 2005. Under the National Maternity Benefit Scheme, financial assistance at the rate of Rs. 500/- per pregnancy for the first two live births used to be provided to women belonging to below poverty line (BPL) households and who had attained 19 years of age or above.

(c) to (f) : Due to poor implementation of the scheme by the States/Union Territories(UT), many States could not utilise the allocated fund. As a result, utilisation certificate amounting to Rs. 53.00 crores are pending from States/UTs. The matter is being vigorously followed up to obtain utilisation certificates. As the core responsibility of implementation of National Maternity Benefit Scheme was with the States/UTs, they were advised to closely monitor the implementation. States were advised to nominate State and District level Nodal Officers for this purpose.

(g): The Hon'ble Supreme Court while hearing the writ petition (Civil) regarding PUCL Versus Union of India and other, expressed concern over the low utilisation of funds by the States under NMBS.

(h) : Due to low utilisation of fund and also due to the fact, the scheme was not addressing the maternal health issues, holistically the scheme has been modified and a new scheme namely Janani Suraksha Yojana has been introduced for promoting safe motherhood. It has the objective of reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality by promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women. Since, the introduction of Janani Suraksha Yojana, majority of the States have been reporting higher expenditure. Against approximately 5.7 lakhs beneficiaries reported in financial year 2005-06, around 21 lakh pregnant women have benefited from this scheme till December, 2006 in the current financial year.